

HOT-LINE FROM HOLLYWOOD!

SUSAN CALLING

Of course, I knew that the Partridge Family were back on the set, working hard to make up for lost time. So I tried to convince myself that I couldn't expect a call to come through too soon . . . I kept telling myself that they'd all be far too busy to fit that in as well. So you can guess how delighted I was when I picked up the 'phone last month and heard Susan's voice coming through loud and clear from Burbank Studios.

SUSAN: Hello Pat. I just can't tell you how great it is to be back here after all this time!

ME: Well, it's certainly wonderful news from our point of view, Susan. We were beginning to wonder if the Partridge Family would have to go into an enforced retirement.

SUSAN: Oh, no . . . Nothing doing on those lines — we'd have turned militant first! But you wouldn't credit how things have changed around here since last season . . .

ME: Why? What's so different?

SUSAN: Well, for a start, all the kids have taken to doing a beanstalk act! They're real little giants, and I'm not kidding you. I've got to admit that I'd not noticed it too much myself, 'cos I'd seen them a few times during the hiatus. So it didn't come as a big shock to me. But, when some of the techs set eyes on them for the first time in six or seven months . . . Well, it sure was funny then! I guess one or two guys figured that Danny was putting them on and was wearing built-up shoes or concealed stilts or something. He certainly has shot up.

ME: And what about you, Susan? Anything dramatic happening there?

SUSAN: Not as far as growing goes . . . No, thank heavens! After all, it would be disastrous if I went streaking up ahead of David. But, fortunately, I seem to be staying put pretty well for the moment.

But I must tell you about the movie I've been doing, though I know you didn't mean that kind of drama when you asked the question!

ME: Come on, tell me more. I didn't ask if you'd been doing any other work because I didn't think you'd have time to fit anything else in before the Partridge Family.

SUSAN: Yes, it was something of a tight squeeze! But, for once in my life, I was glad that I don't actually sing on the Partridge Family records. Because it meant that I could be filming with Twentieth Century Fox while David and Shirley were in the recording studios.

ME: But you still haven't told me what the film was about yet, Susan!

SUSAN: I guess I haven't either! Well, it was called "Terror On The Beach", so I reckon that gives you a notion. It was really very relevant to the modern problems of mugging, terrorisation, and all that sort of thing.

ME: Really?

SUSAN: Yes . . . You see, there's this family that's gone on a quiet camping vacation — like I've done myself hundreds of times. And they're enjoying themselves on the beach when along comes this gang of hoodlums. And from then on it gets real jumpy, I can tell you! I just hope that, by the time I get to go on my next camping holiday, I'll have forgotten all about this movie, 'cos otherwise I know I'm not going to enjoy myself one bit — I'll be so nervy all the time in my imagination!

ME: So what part did you actually play, Susan? At a guess, I'd cast you in the family rather than among the hoodlums . . . Right?

SUSAN: (Laughing) What else, after three years with the Partridge Family! Seems I must be everybody's idea of the 'family' girl, because — you're so right — I was the daughter in the family. Still, the movie was so different from the Partridges that the part felt altogether different. You're left in suspense right up till the last minute and things could go either way . . . But, when you're working on a comedy series, things can never really get that intense or serious.

ME: I suppose not . . . Because you know in advance that you'll be picking up the threads again next week.

SUSAN: Yes, there's that. And also, of course, the Partridge show is meant to be fun. It's a kind of light-hearted thing. The idea is for the audience to be shaking with laughter — not with fright!

ME: But you enjoyed doing a cliff-hanger for a change, did you, Susan?

SUSAN: Oh, sure, I loved it. For one thing it's always nice to have a change from Laurie Partridge just once in a while. And, after that long hiatus, I was dying to get back to work — I'd have welcomed anything, just for the feeling of being back in front of the cameras again . . . Which reminds me — that's where I'm due to be right now! I'm afraid I'll have to go Pat, 'cos I'm in the next scene and I've got to have my make-up touched up first. It's been great rapping with you again. Goodbye for now.